

Drango



Gerald.

DURANGO, COLORADO, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1881.

ch, Weightman & Wilcox,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL

ROCCERS.

best and best assorted stock in
Durango.

Agenda in North-western Colorado for the coming

E. B. BRAND OF
n Creamery F

12(11)

Clothing.

W. THAYER &

E. A. K. BILALINO

Furnishing Goods

ANKETS.

To you show the
 Lock of Blankets & the Best Prices

son, Prentice & Co.,

DAMS. & BAYLY,

Hardware Tinware

HOME TOPICS.

GATHERED FROM THE LOCAL
CURRENT.

The election is now over. Let the latter part of the week be a quiet month's rest. Let us all settle down quietly to our regular knitting.

Our club is open to all who wish to join.

telegraphed Honable Teller and Congressman Hefford that he wishes to retain them as counsel in the case. The South West managers say that they are ready for trial and fear nothing.

Mr. Ben Chas. of the staff of The Denver Tribune, has been in Durango for several days in the interests of his enterprising paper. He is a wide-awake newspaper man and has already observed enough to convince that the magic metropolis has a

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command are
Monday night
out over to Fort
are now stationed
of the Presbyterian
sparring a literary and
entertainment, to be given at
Church, next Thursday
for the benefit of their work
from what we have learned is
the talent engaged for the occasion
we feel safe in adding that those of
national will enjoy a rare treat.

MR. WILLIAM C. HICKS, an attorney of this city, has been appointed United States Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue with headquarters in Durango. His division is composed of the counties of La Plata, Dolores, San Juan, that part of Chama situated south of Mt. Anselmo, and that part of Colima lying west of the San Juan River. Mr. Hicks is a successful gentleman and a good business man and Mr. Henao is pleased to know that this appointment has been so nobly bestowed.

Carson E. Brown, of Chicago
Chief of special agents of the Fed-
eral Bureau for the Northwest
and Max D. King, of Chicago
"As soon as a member of the
staff of special agents out-
side Chicago is being dis-
missed, he is sent to the ap-
pearance of the agents of the mount-

(George Thornale, He elected Sheriff, Henry oral, was chosen Clerk, Waters was elected first

HARVEY WATSON is at
 off of La Plata County
 ment at the hands of
 Commissioners. He has
 rel to the same position
 two years from the first.
 He is generally recognized
 for rare nerve, resolution
 for the position. During
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 while he is in the
 matter of gratification
 people, irrespective of

John Foley, late Du
dicate for Sheriff, viol
Mike Lynch, last night
of Mitchell & Johnson
that Lynch was in the
talking with several per
ley came in and at once
a blow in the face with
with others in quick
Mewers, Mitchell and
promptly as possible.
combustants, but not in
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warrant before Justice
arrest of Foley and th
overed and the arrest
resistance) by Sheriff
large revolver was for
possession of Foley. He
\$100 bonds to appear
Craig this morning at

THE Danville Social regular hoop, this week, day instead of Tuesday, account of the absorbing entertainment which the Alhambra company gave hours before twelve and the regular social spent most enjoyably, were among the Mr. and Mrs. Holman, Mrs. Webb, Mr. and Mrs. and Mrs. Sumner, Mrs. Morrison, Mrs. Calvert, Miss Howell, Miss Little, Messrs. Dawson, Hunt, Hawley, Hewitt, 80 Town, Charles Bayles, Thom. Tall, Chas. P. Ashmun, Roy C. M. and in upon the merry a short time during the

The funeral of Mrs.
ent, wife of Mr. Jappoy,
tended at 90. March -
We know her meeting

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Design and Composition by Kurt Wagner, Camera and Press by Charles Johnson
Produced by the Durango Herald, Durango, Colorado

"There are three things that no
one can do to the entire
satisfaction of anyone else: make
love, poke the fire, and run a
newspaper."

— William Allen White, 1917

For Kurt,

Whose professionalism, skill &
genial personality made this possible.
With my thanks & deep appreciation.

Duane A. Smith
Aug. 18, 1992 #1



City Editor at his desk

Roughing It, 1872 edition

PROLOGUE

Printer's Devil

The new city editor for the Virginia City, Nevada, *Territorial Enterprise* inquired about what his duties might be. The answer came: "....go all over town and ask all sorts of people all sorts of questions, make notes of the information gained, and write them out for publication." Thus advised, Samuel Clemens, better known now as Mark Twain, sallied forth. The once-upon-a-time Mississippi River pilot (and more recently an enthusiastic but down-at-his-luck miner) returned to the newspaper business where, long ago, he had been a printer's devil.

The advice proved wise, and Twain never forgot it. His status in life improved immeasurably with the job, as he proudly noted, "In Nevada, for a time, the lawyer, the editor, the banker, the chief desperado, the chief gambler, and the saloon keeper, occupied the same level in society, and it was the highest." The work, with one exception, pleased him: "It is easy to scribble local rubbish, with the facts all before you; it is easy to clip selections from other papers; it is easy to string out a correspondence from any locality; but it is unspeakable hardship to write editorials."

Surveying his career in later years, Twain concluded, "Nobody, except he has tried it, knows what it is to be an editor." Mark Twain's by-line never graced a Durango newspaper, but his observations hold as true for this town as they did for Virginia City.

Assuming that most reporters and editors (sometimes one and the same) endured the same ordeals as Twain (he eventually departed Nevada, partly because of irate reactions to his editorials), they did so in a noble cause. The town without a paper had few prospects for a future, lacking as it did an advocate to defend it against the barbs of rivals. Ouray's David Day, who would one day migrate south to Durango, proclaimed in the first issue of his *Solid Muldoon* that the "chief commanding feature" of his newspaper would be "devotion" to the interests of San Juan mining, and the people, town, and county of Ouray.

Durango newspapers would cover all these things and more; theirs was a mission to achieve profits and permanence. With vitality and nervous energy, they reported, defended, promoted, chastised, civilized, politicized, and left behind invaluable historic sources. From the very start, in 1880/1881, the men and women of the Durango newspaper world helped to shape their community with a loving, and sometimes caustic, pen. Some succeeded and some stumbled—Durango guaranteed them only an opportunity, not an outcome. This is their story.

"Planters of Empire"

1880-1889

She journeyed from Leadville to the "continual dream of ideal beauty, 'Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,' . . . this city in the wilderness, the Mecca of our ended pilgrimage." The flowery Victorian pen of Caroline Romney, though a feminine one, wielded unexpected power in the man's world of the nineteenth-century newspaper business. Her paper, the *Durango Record*, won the honor of being the community's first.

Its debut came on December 29, 1880. Romney first pledged allegiance to the town and to southwestern Colorado, "a land not only 'flowing with milk and honey,' but seamed with silver and gold and floored with coal." Then, with a fine sense of historical perspective, she wrote:

It [the *Record*] will also afford a permanent record of the growth and prosperity of the town from its earliest days and prove a faithful ally in the furtherance of its future development.

Republican in political perspective, the *Record* also promised to be the "warm friend" of the Spanish-American people of the region. The paper published both a daily and a weekly edition to fulfill the enthusiastic predictions of its editor.

Romney would not have the journalistic territory all to herself. Animas City's *Southwest*, accompanying most of its readers, migrated a couple of miles south in January to reestablish itself as the "new wonder of the Southwest." The older Animas City never recovered from its ill-considered decision to refuse the demands of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. In retaliation, the railroad threatened to establish its own town, a threat that it had carried out elsewhere. The failure of negotiations with Animas City gave birth to Durango in September, 1880.

The *Durango Democrat* entered the fray not long afterward, appearing as early as April, 1881. Following it in June, 1881, was the weekly (and then the daily) *Herald*. Not to be outdone, the *Republican* soon arrived

on the scene. Success or failure in this small market (at the very most, there were only 2,500 people, including every man, woman, and child) depended upon the wit, wisdom, and business acumen of each paper's editor and publisher.

Five little newspapers hissed and clawed like sassy kittens in their attempt to reach the top of the heap in Durango and southwestern Colorado. In this day of personal journalism, the personalities of the editors played a major role in each newspaper's development.

Caroline Romney shot ahead of her contemporaries, and her *Record* made the most immediate impact. Coming to Colorado in 1879, the energetic, petite widow, Caroline Westcott Romney, was a master of her craft. A reporter later described her this way, "She talked with serene and animated grace that was simply charming." The gentility of that statement should not be misinterpreted. This former teacher (at sixteen, she taught Greek and Latin), librarian, and eastern journalist feared nothing and no one, and her sharp pen jabbed at anything and everything.



Caroline Romney later in life

Denver Republican

Jerome L. Marsh and George Marsh, with their *Herald*, became her principal rivals. This father and son team moved in from Sheboygan, Wisconsin, where they had published a weekly for the preceding eleven years. With a daughter and sister already in Durango, they decided to come west. Fifty-seven years of newspaper experience stood Jerome in good stead; one of those with whom he had once worked was Horace Greeley. George, who took the more active role in their paper, promised that it would be "faithfully dedicated to spreading the truth respecting the growth and prospect of Durango." This policy caused him grief, when a local merchant took offense at one of the "truths" revealed by the *Herald*'s editor. The offended party fought back, attacking his tormentor physically. Amid charges and counter-charges, and a threatened libel action against the paper (not to mention the self-righteous chuckles from the *Record*), the pugilist was found guilty and fined. The outcome of the libel charges went unrecorded.

Like Romney, the Marshes planned to spare no effort to make their newspaper "attractive" in appearance. They promised to clothe "the naked facts in the simplest and plainest English at their command" and not to mislead anyone when describing Durango's attractions. Taking the high road that later newspapers would have done well to follow, the *Herald* declared that it was "not in the best interests of the town to have a boom" before local resources could be developed. From Midwestern stock, the Marshes forthrightly proclaimed their political leanings: "Sincerely believing in the essential principles of the Republican Party, it will be most unequivocally Republican in its political utterances."

The two Republican newspapers ganged up on the outspoken *Democrat* and the more serene *Southwest*. The *Democrat* succumbed quickly to the trench warfare, but before it departed, it scored a first — its employees struck to secure overdue wages. This incident delighted Caroline Romney, who reported on May 9, 1881, that the paper "a second time has gone up the flume. . . . Owing to lack of brains and lack of money the D. D. came to grief this morning." The *Democrat* struggled on briefly, but, like its namesake party, it

faced an uphill battle to capture the hearts and minds of Durango.

The *Southwest*, too, fought on under the skillful pen of the 24-year-old, "energetic, persevering and enterprising" Frank Hartman, who, with his partner, Kentucky newspaperman Willis Emery, purchased it in October, 1882. Hartman, who had previously owned and published Rico's *Dolores News*, would have the longer impact on Durango. Marsh extended the "right hand of fellowship to these gentlemen," for which they duly thanked him. But politics were politics, and by the end of the month, the *Southwest* was gleefully reporting that "The Republican family are hopelessly wandering around the county seat of La Plata county, dreading the fate that shall meet it on the 8th of November." The Democrats did do well in that campaign, as well as could be expected in Republican Colorado, winning the governor's chair for the first time. Hartman could not restrain his thoughts about the party's resurgence: "THANK GOD! The light is breaking at last in a glorious stream of sunshine. . . . Year after year bravely struggling against terrible odds, patiently enduring defeat, and springing to battle with the courage and spirit of its more fortunate days . . . (November 11)."

It was all great fun for Durangoans, whom the *Herald* toasted in its December 29, 1883, issue, "cordially wishing each and every one of its readers who reside in twenty five states and territories, a happy and prosperous New Year." All the newspapers boomed themselves unabashedly in their own communities. A "large and handsomely lettered sign 'Durango Herald'" was placed on top of the *Herald* building. That "will enable our friends easily to find us. Give us a trial, and, if you are not satisfied, we will forever after hold our peace."

Marsh gave himself a pat on the back in August of 1881 for being a one-man staff, but with business prospects increasing, he hoped to "relieve his pen of part of the work." He and the others turned out papers that featured local news ("home topics"), mining news, "boiler plate" from other newspapers and journals, state, regional and national news, occasional sports, and those all-important advertisements — local, some state, and a few national. All of it could be purchased for

ten cents a single copy; the weekly *Herald* cost \$3 per year (the *Record*, \$4) and \$10 for the daily. Without apology, Romney demanded, "all subscriptions must be accompanied with cash." Money was always a problem; the editors/managers seemed chronically short of it. Delinquent subscribers drove them up the office wall.

Outspoken, feisty, and colorful, these editors displayed several common traits. They wielded a persistently pesky, and often witty, pen, and all seemed to possess transient natures, willing to move on to greener pastures at the drop of an "i." Romney, after a year and a half, moved to California as a correspondent for eastern newspapers. Caroline explained that "we (she and her brother, attorney George Westcott, who served as business manager) made money hand over fist the first year. Then the opposition came in and we spent it all beating our opponent." The *Herald* purchased the *Record*'s presses, as well as its "entire office and good will," and merged the daily and weekly editions under the *Herald* banner in early May, 1882.

Before she left, however, Caroline Romney gave Durango some of the sharpest, most reform minded, and most descriptive newspaper writing it would ever see.

The best way for women to pursue, in business enterprises at least, is not to wait for men to accord them their rights, but to go ahead and take them. Such women have so much practical work to do, that, as a rule, they haven't much time to talk women's rights. They do what is better — they act them. (Feb. 19, 1881)

We want girls! Girls who can get themselves up in good shape to go to a dance. . . . We want girls who will go to church and to bible class on Sundays and that kind who can draw a congregation of the other sex, and who will take a buggy ride after the lesson is over. We want girls to wait on table. We want girls for sweethearts. We want fat and funny girls to make us smile all over. . . . The only lack

of our resources is those potent civilizers of their pioneer brothers — the girls. (March 12, 1881)

People of southwestern Colorado! Make a note of these things [Denver attacking Durango]. Remember that Denver will never do the San Juan country justice. When you come to vote on the state capital question, cast your vote for Pueblo, the representative city of Southern Colorado. (May 7, 1881)

The Chinese opium dives are doing a very good business. It is alleged by those who know, that night after night, they are full of intoxicated victims. Isn't it about time the authorities should look this matter up, and stop it? (Sept. 3, 1881)

Parrott City people don't want to live there in the winter anyway. Let them vote for Durango, where they will spend at least half the year. [County seat election] (Oct. 22, 1881)

Plump girls are said to be going out of fashion. The plumper the slimmer her chance. (December 17, 1881)

There are about one thousand and one worthless curs about this city and we think a killing is in order. A buggy cannot be driven on First Street faster than a walk without ten or a dozen running after it making more noise than the law allows. (April 21, 1882)

In 1884, Denver newspaperman "FitzMac" (James MacCarthy) interviewed Caroline Romney, now back in Colorado and editor and manager of the *Trinidad Review*. The *Southwest*, June 28, 1884, reprinted the interview. FitzMac praised her for being "by far the best informed and most thoroughly competent journalist (with one exception) that I

have met on the country press in Colorado. . .” He offered the perfect summation for Romney’s Durango career:

It would be too much to call Mrs. Romney a powerful writer, but she is a clever one, and does a uniform grade of high-class work. Her paper is always worth reading, and her political opinions are sensible, practicable and fearless. There are probably not five journalists in the state who are her equals.

The rival *Trinidad Advertiser* paid her this tribute, “As a lady, in the full sense of the word, she has no superior, and as a scholar few equals.”

In the dog-eat-dog world of Durango journalism, the various newspapers had to scramble to survive. *The Southwest*, typical of the others, advertised thus: “First-class presses, the largest Faces of Type and the Most Modern Material, and the BEST WORKMEN are employed in this office.” It promised to “run out legal blanks” and fine commercial printing “equal to those printed anywhere.”

Frank Hartman, who had become the sole owner and proprietor of the *Southwest*, changed its name to the *Idea* on August 2, 1884. He introduced to Durango readers his associate editor and sister, Iowa-born, 22-year-old, Lillian Hartman. Lillian, who ranked among “the ablest and best posted in general newspaper work” (according to brother Frank), had ruined her health managing the *Rico Record* and had come down to Durango’s lower elevation to recuperate. Unfortunately, she had to leave the *Idea* in a little over a year for the same reason and eventually moved to southern California. Frank Hartman sold out in October, 1887, and followed his sister to “sunny California.” The *Idea*, under new owners Charles Turner and Henry C. Butler, continued to publish until it was burned out in the great Durango fire of July 1, 1889. It never arose, Phoenix-like, from its ashes.

The Hartmans did not stay long in California, returning in July, 1888, to establish an “independent” newspaper, *The Examiner*. Evidence of its independence lay only in its



Representative Women of Colorado

Lillian Hartman in the early 1900s

support of the reelection of Democrat Grover Cleveland. Proclaiming that “while we invite honest and friendly criticism, we reserve all rights and waive to no power but God,” the Hartmans did not outlast Cleveland’s defeat and moved their press to New Mexico.

Other pioneer newspapermen also departed. The “vigorous and ready writer,” C. Sam Nichols, purchased the *Herald* on April 1, 1887, from the Marshes. George Marsh also relocated to New Mexico in search of new opportunity. Nichols owned the paper for only a very short time, selling it to George and Solomon Raymond, who promised, “We have come to Durango to stay. The paper will be run in the interest of the City of Durango, La Plata county and southwestern Colorado.” Times changed but never expectations. George Raymond had traveled the journalism circuit in the San Juans during the previous decade, working in the newspaper business at Lake City, Animas Forks, and most recently in Silverton as editor of the *La Plata Miner*.

As the pioneering days of the newspaper drew to a close, Durango lawyer and writer Richard McCloud observed, “Durango has always been noted as the home of live, active local newspapers.” In an attempt to be fair to all the editors, the following examples of yesterday’s news are given to today’s readers:

The Silverton club had decidedly the best of the applause, but, as the Durango players had the best of the game, they could not complain. [The visiting Durango baseball team’s win, 11-7, over the

Silverton nine] (*Herald*, July 7, 1881)

Go to Church this morning, and take along your wife, sister, mother or sweetheart. You'll feel all the better for so doing. (*Herald*, May 14, 1882)

The *Herald* printers have wonderfully nimble fingers. The sales of yesterday's edition amounted to 684 and at least one hundred more copies could have been sold if the edition had not been exhausted. [The *Herald*, praising itself for getting an edition on the streets twenty minutes after the execution of George Woods on May 23, 1882] (*Herald*, May 24, 1882)

All that makes it disagreeable to live in Colorado is a wind like the one of today. (*Southwest*, Oct. 14, 1882)

Prize fighting is as useless as anything that can be imagined. In America it ought to be put down. Bull fighting, cock-fighting, dog fighting and man slugging are about as useless as brimstone in heaven. (*Southwest*, Aug. 16, 1884)

For the great number of good people, the excellent class of business men and the well conducted schools and churches Durango is blessed with, the little city is, more than any other of its population, cursed with something ["fallen women"] which the blushing cheeks of pure women and the pride of true men should have frowned down long ago. (*Idea*, March 27, 1886)

Ill bred men who come to Durango to drink the worst whiskey they can find and whoop, yell, shoot and fight, are not the kind of people Durango is inclined to cater to. (*Idea*, March 27, 1886)

The destructive fire of July 1, 1889, ravaged more than the *Idea* office; it destroyed eight business and residential blocks and ended an era. A fire such as that can either doom a town or serve as a form of "urban renewal." The *Herald*, July 26, let the world know how Durangoans reacted: "The *Herald* desires to say a word in commendation of the people of Durango . . . Never before have we been in a town where people were burned out where they have taken it so well." Rebuilding began almost before the ashes had cooled, and Durango raced toward what it expected to be a wonderfully prosperous future.



La Plata County Historical Society

Pioneer photographer Frank Gonner captured the aftermath of the 1889 fire. Among the ashes was the *Idea* office

"Condemned by Many, Read by All"

The Day Era, 1889-1924

The Raymonds and the *Herald* were not to have the newspaper field to themselves. H. T. Keane launched the *Durango Weekly Tribune* in October, 1889, after which the Hartmans reappeared and purchased the paper (renaming it *The Examiner*) in August, 1891. (This marked the second time the Hartmans used the name *Examiner*, if the accounts are accurate; no copies of the second paper are known to exist.) They sold out to *The Great Southwest* in July, 1892. Lillie, who had married, would stay in Durango and later operate the "Shakespeare School of Physical Culture and Dramatic Art."

The Great Southwest's daily edition hit the streets on August 1, 1892, "The name was bestowed in honor of the vast region of which Durango is the center and the metropolis." The editor, Frank P. Warner, wrote, "You will find *The Great Southwest* never dirty, rarely wrong and not always dull." The newspaper's purpose included, "Politics, Republican, straight—straight in everything."

The biggest impact on Durango's newspaper world came with the earlier arrival of Colorado's premier newspaperman, David F. Day, who had brought his *Solid Muldoon* south from Ouray in March, 1892. Day had founded the paper back in 1879. His personality, outspokenness, and writing style had made it one of the best known in the state, and one that was also nationally noticed. The Days—father, son, and son-in-law—would be agitators in Durango's newspaper world for the next generation.

Forty-five-year-old Day relished the controversies he generated. His wife Victoria noted, "He attacked anyone, even his friends if he thought they were wrong." She went on to say that he did not know "what fear was . . . he wasn't afraid of the Devil." A group of men had raised funds to bring Day to Durango; according to family memory, most of them were Democrats. One of these, Thomas Rockwood, was driven to the point of exasperation by the ornery Day. Rockwood complained that he had put up \$800 to "get the old

man over here," but now he was "damned if he wouldn't give twice that amount to send him back." Those comments accurately portray the reactions of many others to the Ohio-born army veteran (he enlisted at age fifteen in January, 1862), Congressional Medal of Honor winner for gallantry at Vicksburg, Ute Indian agent, and extraordinary newspaperman. John W. Turner, who worked for Day, remembered a "big hearted" man who loved his plug tobacco and hard liquor. As "a paragraph writer he had no peer," and he wrote as his conscience dictated, letting the "chips fall where they may." Turner recalled that editor Day had forty-nine libel suits brought against him at once. He provided the perfect epigram for Day's journalistic efforts when he said, "His paper was condemned by many, but was read by all."

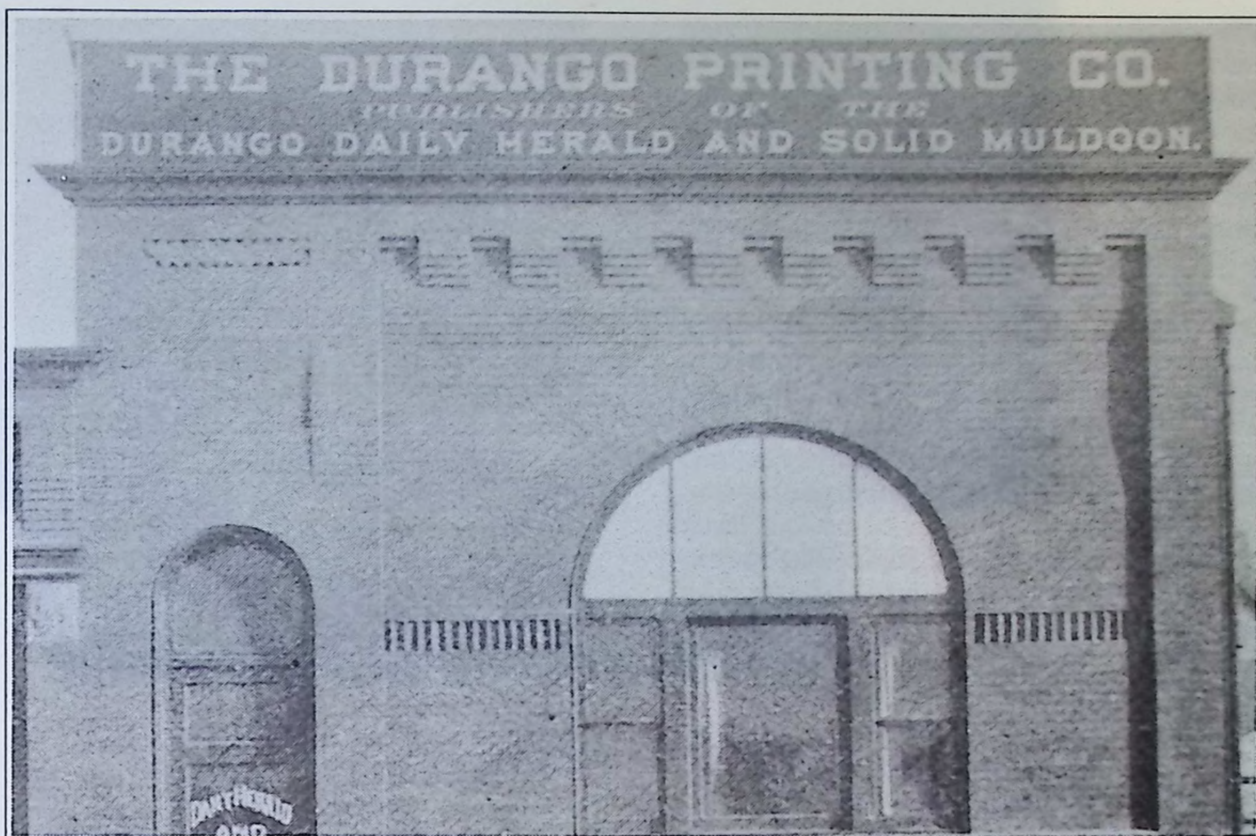
Dave Day's columns sparkled with wit, news, and occasional practical jokes that still trip the unwary researcher. "As far as sarcasm and getting wit in the paper he was the tops," said Richard Macomb, who worked for Day while he (Macomb) was in high school. Samples from the *Muldoon* include these:

The police court is almost as quiet as a graveyard these days. The first thing we know the officers will pay some one to create a disturbance. (*Solid Muldoon*, Dec. 29, 1893)

The doctors have given up all hopes of saving the year 1893 and death is expected inside of three days. (*Solid Muldoon*, Dec. 29, 1893)

Happy is the young man who has a fast horse and cutter or the necessary wherewithal to hire one. Getting a girl for the occasion does not worry him. (*Solid Muldoon*, Dec. 6, 1894)

Dave Day leaped eagerly into the newspaper wars, and the Raymonds met him head on. The papers came to a quick truce in July, 1892. The *Herald* would be printed as a daily, the *Solid Muldoon* as a weekly, both being owned by the Durango Printing Company.



Herald office 1890s, now 135 E. 8th St.

Goodman's Inc.

All other editions of each would be discontinued. The reasons for this consolidation have been lost to history, but it seems likely that it was part of the plan when Day moved south to Durango. Whatever the reasons, two of the region's most experienced editors had joined forces to give Durango extraordinary newspapers.

They published the *Herald* early enough to make all "outgoing morning trains and stages" and to be a staple of every Durango breakfast table. *The Great Southwest* came out in the afternoon; not to be outdone, it claimed "a larger circulation in the San Juan country, both daily and weekly, than any other paper published." That constituted, perhaps, an exaggerated claim, since the popular *Solid Muldoon*, known as "Dave Day's *Muldoon*," professed to having a circulation of 3,300 each week. No matter, Durangoans were pleased and proud of the accomplishments. The 1892 *Durango Directory* waxed eloquent:

Both dailies publish the latest telegraphic news up to the minute

of going to press, the city editors have a keen scent for news, and the editorial columns display remarkable ability in the discussion of the live questions of the day and hour. Durango is willing to be judged in the matter of enterprise and goaheadtiveness by its newspapers.

Their activities did not stop there. The first-class job-printing establishments they furnished made it "no longer necessary 'to send out' for anything in the job printing line."

Sad to say, the local journalistic and printing achievements failed to generate the golden days forecast for the 1890s. First came the national crash of 1893, which plummeted the country into a depression and which lasted in Durango and Colorado for nearly the remainder of the decade. Following that came the divisive political contest over "free silver," which ended with the bitter presidential election of 1896.

The silver issue somehow managed to look both simple and complex simultaneously.

The falling price of silver gave momentum to "the cause." Because of Colorado's status as the number one silver producing state, the stakes were particularly high. Emotional explanations for the calamity abounded, but the rational one lay in over-production and declining markets. By the 1890s, the now twenty-year-old debate over the issue had engendered much heated reaction and had split the country, East vs. West, debtor vs. creditor, Republican vs. Democrat, and Gold Bug vs. Silverite. The Silverites claimed that the silver question affected everyone from the Main Street merchant to the rural farmer. The Durango newspapers rallied to this political issue in a rare display of unity. They unreservedly championed silver. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the tenor of the times:

Senator [Horace] Tabor is always sound on the silver question, and is worth more to Colorado than all the gold-bug, gold spectacled politicians and statesmen in the state. (*Durango Weekly Tribune*, July 1, 1891)

This is one matter that cannot be over done. (*Daily Southwest*, July 16, 1893)

The silver cause is hot. . . . The only way in which the Democratic Party can redeem itself is to pass a free coinage bill. (*Solid Muldoon*, Dec. 6, 1894)

The controversy came to a head in the presidential election of 1896, when the Democrats nominated William Jennings Bryan to champion a silver platform. The Republicans chose William McKinley and gold. For the *Herald*, the choice was clear, "Bryan's march through New York and Pennsylvania is one continual ovation. And still we are told there are no silver advocates in the east."

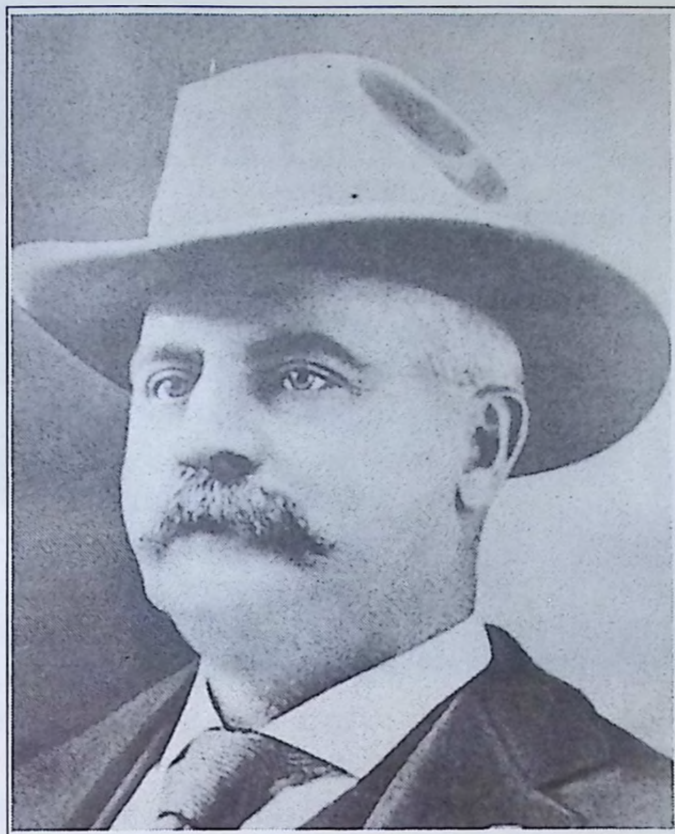
The Strater Annex was recommended as the place to "spend election night"; it would provide complete election "return bulletins every few minutes," plus good music for dancing. According to legend, editor Day held forth on the corner of Ninth and Main,

Durango's business heart, with a supply of powerful firecrackers. Every time a state came in for Bryan, he yelled at the top of his voice, ". . . goes for BRYAN" and pitched a lighted firecracker into the air. La Plata County overwhelmingly approved "silver's champion," Bryan receiving 2,729 votes to McKinley's 88. In Colorado, Bryan captured nearly eighty-five per cent of the vote. "Still Hopeful for Bryan," the *Durango Herald and Daily Southwest* (they had merged, apparently in 1894) noted on Wednesday, November 4. Alas, the Bryan landslide in Colorado failed to sweep the country, and McKinley and gold won out.

On the subject of President McKinley, Durangoans were red-faced over an AP wire service news release concerning him in the late winter of 1898. Tension had mounted in the United States, when Spain's activities in Cuba became evident. Then, when the battleship *Maine* was mysteriously blown up in Havana harbor by a reported "infernal weapon," America adopted "Remember the Maine, to hell with Spain" as its war cry. An AP story, datelined March 20, claimed that a mob in Durango had burned McKinley in effigy, speakers had "indulged in heated speeches" condemning the president, and the crowd had suggested that "people subscribe to a fund to reimburse Spain for the explosive used on the *Maine*." Mortification! How unpatriotic! No red-blooded American would oppose McKinley's policies toward "barbaric" Spain, least of all in Durango.

Local newspapers jumped to Durango's defense and investigated the matter. It turned out, according to the *Herald*, that the perpetrator of the hoax, Walter Davis, had been trying "to do up" the paper. The *Herald* refused to identify "the morning publication" that sent the release, but it was probably the *Durango Wage Earner*, which had started publishing back in 1895. For whatever reason, Durangoans had suffered humiliation, which they assuaged by flocking to the colors when war came in April. In July, when Davis and his family departed for Denver, the more relaxed *Herald* could gloat, "Our people are not ninnies and naturally resented being misrepresented."

Sometime along the way, the alliance between the *Herald* and Dave Day fell apart;



The Durango Herald

Dave Day, Durango's outspoken editor

unfortunately, the scattered runs of newspapers that remain fail to give a clear picture of why and when it ended. Thereafter, Day (now the *Democrat*) and Raymond and their two papers assaulted each other with verbal vigor.

Durango merchants pay a royal price for stupidity when pensioning the *Herald*. The sheet is practically without circulation other than the limited number of subscribers in the city. (*Durango Democrat*, May 24, 1895)

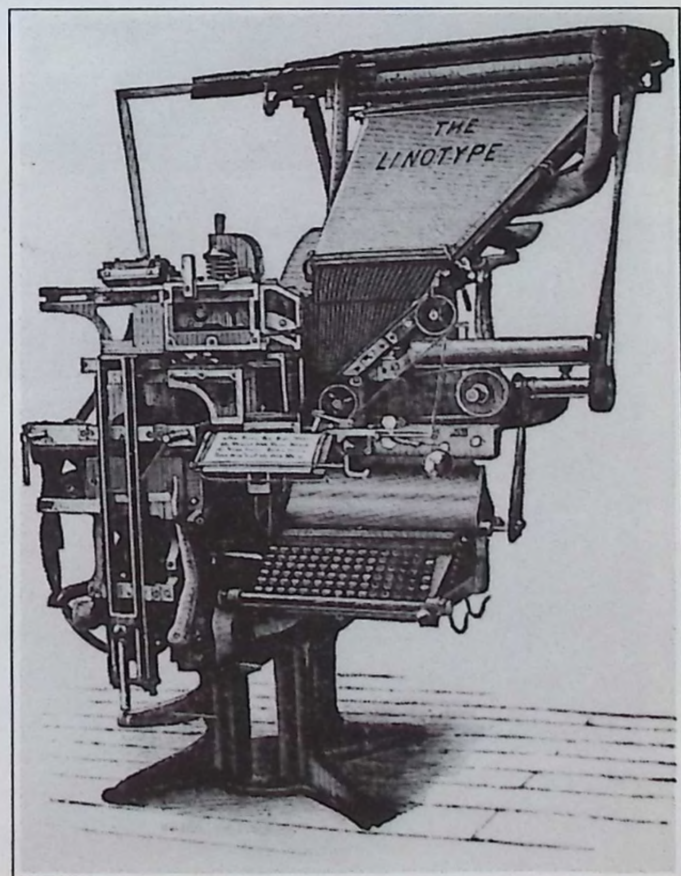
The fact is that since Mr. Day was imported from Ouray he has invariably been opposed to the public interests of this community whenever occasion offered. (*Herald*, Aug. 16, 1899)

Personal journalism remained alive and well in Durango.

The feud continued into the new century. Day referred to his rival as the "bladder," and

the *Herald* returned the vitriol: "Day and the *Democrat* have been only a blight on Durango's prosperity." The new century produced more than newspaper bickering; reform seemed to sweep America on the wings of the wind. The Progressive movement aroused interest throughout the country. Americans, assessing their circumstances, found that all was not well in their "Garden of Eden." The heightened citizen awareness played to Dave Day's strength, which led the *Democrat* to muck-rake local and state issues (and perhaps prompted the *Herald's* previously cited 1904 comment). The *Herald* could not cast too many stones, however, without having to defend its protest against the "adulteration or deception" practiced in the sale of oleomargarine.

The *Democrat* attacked trusts of any shape or size, the sale of "bogus and rancid butter," Durango meat men who used "chemicals to restore color in meat," "terrible sanitary conditions," high railroad rates, the Denver & Rio Grande's "beastly" service, rates, and treatment of "a helpless patronage." The pa-



Turn-of-the-century Linotype press

Merritt McKenzie

The mid-1960s management team. Standing: Don Schlichting, assistant to the publishers; Rex Helmick, production manager; Ernie Kerr, advertising manager; Bill Conrad, managing editor. Sitting: Morley and Arthur Ballantine.



Wayne Moorehead, reporter.



Willis Young, chief pressman, and pressroom crew, Leonard Archuleta and Kent Curtis.

(Right) Lloyd Gladson, job shop manager. (Middle) Composing room staff, Rhonda La Venture and Robin Goodnough, mid-1960s. (Far right) Mail room, Bob Coulter, supervisor, fall of 1965.



Behind the

The heart and soul of a newspaper write, print, and distribute each day. They are forgotten, buried deep in 'history.' As Thomas Hornsby wrote in *Against the Mountains*,

We used to know, we don't
But I have seen enough of
And lovers and old men are
The bones of churches and
To know how far we may have
And where we're going for

This photographic essay stands

Headlines

paper are the women and men who
day's edition. Except for a very few,
in "that great dust-heap called
Ferril wrote in his poem, "Waltz

know any more.

ills and blood,
l windowsills,
the bones of mountains,
ve come together,
a little way.

as a tribute to them all.



*Jess Pedersen
speeds along his
Herald paper
route, 1992.*



(Top) Chris Aaland, foreground, and Eric Hagerman compose the sports page, 1992. (Bottom) Jim Dyar, left, Sports Editor and Eric Hagerman man the sports desk, 1992.

(Top) Kurt Wagner designs graphics and composes ads on a Macintosh, 1992. (Bottom) Mail room, Denny LePlatt, supervisor, 1992.

Perry McKinney, assistant pressman (left) and Wes Siebert, head pressman, running color comics, 1992.

Photos courtesy Herald files and Miles Davies.

per supported the city manager form of city government and initiative, referendum and recall. A State Inspector visited Durango in 1912 and found a number of violations of the Pure Food and Drug law in bakeries, meat markets, dairies, and restaurants. The conclusion that "food conditions" in Durango were unsatisfactory outraged some locals, but not the *Democrat*. It believed that a "thorough cleaning was needed" and that Durango was now "launched in the right track."

Richard Macomb sold papers for both the *Denver Post* and the *Herald*. He remembered years later the life of the paper boy, "We folded our own papers; if we had eight sheets, we had to insert those sheets and then fold that way."

I used to make it to all the bars, when I was selling the *Denver Post*. . . Taylor Maddox took me around the first night I went out on the route and that was mostly on the West Side of Main. He took me along and he told these bartenders that I would be bringing the papers in, and I was not supposed to know anything about what went on in there. I wasn't supposed to say a word to anyone about who was in there or anything like that.

Macomb also went into the red-light district, "which at the time was run by Bessie Rivers."

The third newspaper in the field, the *Durango Wage Earner*, managed to maintain its existence. A four-page weekly paper, its issue of February 3, 1905, contained, for example, a column on local happenings, one on mines and mining (taken from the *La Plata Miner*, a paper published for the mining camp of La Plata), and state and national news. Interestingly, the paper included very little local advertising. By August, 1905, it had been renamed the *Durango Weekly Banner and Durango Weekly Wage Earner*, thereby laying claim to Durango's longest newspaper title. That unwieldy tag lasted for two years, until it reverted to the original. The paper went out of business in 1912.

Then in his sixties, Day gradually withdrew from daily operation of the newspaper.

But he had shaped it in his image, and his pen still occasionally pricked an individual or an issue that rankled him. When he "passed to the Great Beyond" on June 22, 1914 (writing almost to the end), the event elicited the epilogue for several eras, including the one of personal journalism, of which his Durango career had been so much a part. Day "lived and died a 'square' man," the *Democrat* eulogized, "even his enemies respected him for his integrity."

For the new editor, Rod Day, and the rival *Herald*, times changed with a rapidity that Durango had not experienced for a generation. Both papers heated up over the "Hun": "pro-German, pro-vandal, anti-president or anti-Americans . . . will find the sledding damned awfully rough from now on (*Democrat*, April 13, 1917)." Hate emerged as the byword. Colorado, and then the nation, went "dry," an idea that would have elicited Dave Day's most awesome ire. The ultimate reform served only to encourage the law's flouting, as Americans patronized speakeasies and bootleggers with alacrity. Locally, mining



La Plata County Historical Society

Rod Day (left) and his attorney, Ben Russell, at his trial

declined, as agriculture sustained the economy. Then came the changes brought by the automobile, women's rights, the radio, and the movies; all of these converged to constitute the era of the "roaring twenties."

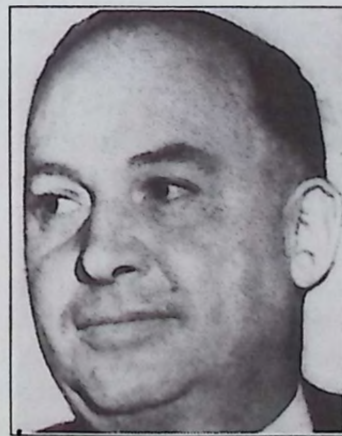
The long-standing newspaper rivalry thundered violently over Durango when Rod Day shot and killed the *Herald's* city editor, William Wood. The incident was sparked by a series of "newspaper exchanges," "joshing

Times of upheaval, doubt, and reexamination, such as occurred in this decade, often create concern, fear, and a yearning for the good old days. Add to that mix, the racism/nativism that surfaced and Americans' pen-

Over the years, Durango has had several "special issue" newspapers, most of them very short-lived. One of them, the monthly *Durango Klansman*, appeared during the time of unrest (1925). It supported the Klan's stand for "THE BIBLE IN THE SCHOOLS," advocated "America for Americans," and attacked bootleggers and Catholics. Earlier, the *Uplift*, *Durango Trades Journal* (reportedly

Why the Durango Klansman

Sunday Dances



13

started by Frank Hartman to "lambaste Dave Day"), *Durango Weekly Banner*, and the *Farmers' Voice* had briefly challenged the established journals. No copies of any are known to exist.

Meanwhile, Rod Day sold the *Democrat*, with "the most complete and modernized plant of any town even double or triple its population in the Rocky Mountain States," to George W. Lane and John B. O'Rourke. The two long-time journalistic foes, the *Herald* and the *Democrat*, continued to square off; nothing had changed. The critical question, at this point, was whether a less prosperous and rural-oriented Durango really needed two newspapers. Time would tell. For the Day era, as Rod wrote on December 8, 1924, "Au Revoir, but not good bye."

Depression Days to PostWar Boom 1924-52

Despite the appellation applied to the "roaring twenties," those years did not roar in southwestern Colorado, nor in much of the rural United States, for that matter. Newspaper capabilities improved along with advanced equipment, however, so Durangoans were able to read a better-quality printed paper than ever before. Personal journalism fell victim to modernization, unfortunately, depriving the profession of some of its more colorful elements. Reporters became more important, as the influence of editors declined.

Durango exhibited many trends that revolutionized journalism. Newspapers began to imitate one another in format and content, thanks in large degree to the expansion of the Associated Press, United Press, and other newsgathering agencies. "Boilerplate" (syndicated stereotyped material) also helped to produce the same result. By the turn of the century, the linotype machine had all but eliminated typesetting by hand; high-speed, versatile presses came right on its heels. The telephone and typewriter helped to speed the transmission and composition of copy.

The sensationalism that characterized popular turn-of-the-century "yellow journalism" was best represented in the headlines found on the front page of the *Democrat*. The following are examples that got the attention of readers: "The Scum of Europe are Landing" (referring to eastern European immigrants, April, 1906), "Flim Flam Renewed" (the failure of a local bank, Nov., 1908), and "Old Enough to Know Better" (the marriage of a 71-year-old woman, Oct., 1909).

The *Herald*, not to be outdone, occasionally equaled its rival in sensational reporting. New publishing techniques allowed photographs to be used to enhance stories, more elaborate advertisements to be printed, and full-color comic strips to appear, making the papers more visually pleasing. Mass journalism and standardization had come to Durango as surely as they had to Denver and New York City.

Modern methods led to consolidation and the emergence of the one-newspaper town in places where press competition had always prevailed. Consolidation came quickly to Durango, when Mr. and Mrs. John Henry McDevitt purchased the *Democrat* in April, 1928. Better known as Harry and Bessie, they had bought the *Herald* from the Raymonds twelve years before. The McDevitts united the two once warring factions, creating the *Herald-Democrat*. They continued to publish both the weekly *Democrat* (until 1932) and the *Herald* (until 1945). "One was supposedly Republican and the other Democrat, and that way all the lawyers and others who wanted to run legals could run them either in a Republican or Democratic paper."



Doris Wilson

Bessie and Harry McDevitt, long-time *Herald* publishers

Harry promised "a larger and a better paper in every respect than either of the former Durango dailies." He also pledged "a newspaper, neither a political nor a personal organ. It will be as fair as truthful. . . ." Democrats expressed doubts about that. The McDevitts would not have Durango to themselves for long. Rod Day, John O'Rourke, and others founded the *Durango News*, May 2, 1930, as a Democratic competitor of the Republican *Herald-Democrat*. Competition remained alive and well in Durango.

Silverton-born, 44-year-old Harry McDevitt published the newspaper into the World War II era. An outstanding Canon City high school athlete, who had moved back to Durango and married Bessie Lake, McDevitt was a life-long, fervent Republican of "strong convictions." Elected to the Colorado general assembly in the nineteen-teens, he later served as postmaster under the Harding,

Coolidge, and Hoover administrations. Described as an "erudite personality," McDevitt gave Durango a dependable newspaper during his ownership. His daughter, Doris Wilson, when asked if her father had enjoyed newspaper work, replied, "Yes, very much. It gave him a chance to meet people and express his ideas to people."

While many things about the newspaper business changed over the years, some others remained nearly the same. Merritt McKenzie was hired in 1929 as a printer's devil at a dollar per day for an eight-hour day, six-day week. He swept floors, stoked the furnace, and "cast pigs and cuts." McKenzie would retire forty-seven years later with a reputation for keeping the machinery running, while always maintaining a keen sense of humor. When a disassembled old press was sold, he included an extra spare gear with it: "They'll really be bothered when they put this son-of-a-gun back together and find one left over." Of his boss, Merritt said, "Oh, he was a one and only. He could get real mad and maybe jump all over you, and in two minutes he would come back and apologize, and that was the end of it."

Readers always knew where McDevitt stood politically. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal became one of his favorite whipping boys. During the 1936 campaign, the *Herald-Democrat* howled, "New Deal use of relief money in so-called politically 'doubtful' states continues to increase." It reprinted without comment an editorial from the Buffalo, New York, *Evening News*, "Vote for Roosevelt, Communists Told." Finally, McDevitt attacked Social Security:

The omnibus 'Social Security' Act rushed half-baked through Congress provides neither for the needy, nor gives security to anybody but the politicians and bureaucrats who administer it.

McDevitt and the Republicans ate crow that November: "ROOSEVELT IS RE-ELECTED, New Deal Administration returned to power in tremendous landslide," screamed the *Herald-Democrat* headline of November 4. As late as December, 1940, McDevitt continued to rail against the party

in power, as in this editorial:

When any people succumb to the lure of political coddling and give up their right of private action, even in a small degree, they have taken the first step toward state socialism.

The 1930s and 1940s were soul-trying times for Republicans.

The *News* ("A Paper for People Who Think as New and Modern as Today") published weekly or semi-weekly, a schedule apparently dependent upon its editors' inclinations and finances. It supported the president and his New Deal. The *News* approved of the coming of public works funds in September, 1933, so that the "unemployed of this district will have a meal ticket during the approaching winter." The National Recovery Administration, with its industrial/business plans and regulations, received a hearty endorsement from the paper. Encouraging its readers to "sign the pledge" and buy from merchants who displayed the "blue eagle," the *News* marched right in line with the New Deal.

When the Supreme Court struck down the Agriculture Adjustment Act in late 1935, the *News* pointed out the cost to local farmers and raised the question of what would happen to farm prices. The popular Civilian Conservation Corps and its projects garnered thorough newspaper coverage, as did the construction of the "Pine River dam," better known today as Vallecito.

Durango and La Plata County of the 1930s had come a long way from 1880. Like the rest of the state and the nation, they suffered from a depressed urban economy, complicated by an agricultural economy that had been foundering since World War I. Not prospering or expanding as they had done previously, the city and county had reached a plateau. Mining was severely depressed, and the county ranked thirty-fifth among all Colorado counties in agricultural production (fifty-ninth in the number of automobiles!). An economic infusion was urgently needed. It would come, though not for another decade.

The newspapers manifested these somber times. Only occasionally now did the journal-

istic barbs torment and the arrows of reform fly. One of those occasions came after a local man was fined \$25 for driving his car eighty miles per hour down Main, then crashing it into another vehicle. The *News* compared the incident to one in Delta, Colorado, where a man received a \$500 fine and was given six months in jail for running his car into a lamp post while intoxicated. "Durango has numerous traffic violations. Delta has practically none. Why?"

Why, too, did Durango still harbor "Dens of Vice"? The *News* ran an expose (Aug. 25, 1939) of the area at the south end of Main. It denounced the large number of beer parlors and liquor establishments that thrived in that portion of town. Those who were "familiar with conditions" claimed that, among the "illegal practices," were gambling, white slave trade, and "shake downs."

Moral attitudes and social mores were changing, however. The *Herald-Democrat* provided a sample of that change when it carried a Kiva Theatre movie ad for an "owl show." For adults only, the film "Gambling with Souls" promised to make "strong men shudder and weak men faint." This "bitter indictment of a girlhood's sacrifice to ignorance" claimed to be the most "daring picture that has ever been made."

"U. S. DECLARES WAR ON THE JAP EMPIRE," the *Herald-Democrat* cried in huge headlines on December 8, 1941. And on that date, both the newspapers and Durangoans went to war. The community and its residents would never be the same again. The *News* of December 12 proved how quickly the war's impact came. City officials prepared the community for emergency defense problems, took sabotage precautions, and advised residents to gather "defense scrap iron." The mayor and council sent a resolution to Governor Ralph Carr:

The municipal government of the City of Durango will render every possible service to the local civil defense council, to our state government, to the government of the United States of America and to the armed forces thereof in defending our country and in defeating its attackers.

The newspapers chronicled the events of their community as it went to war and contributed to the war effort on the home front until the victory was won. When the first boys were drafted, Durangoans enthusiastically cheered them on their way. But as early as April, 1942, the *Herald-Democrat* felt obligated to admonish its readers, "Crowds weren't so large along the streets. Dare we get blase about seeing men off to fight?" Feature stories of service men and men predominated throughout these years. When noted war correspondent Ernie Pyle referred to a "Basin Boy," Durango glowed with pride. (The term "San Juan Basin" became a common term to describe the broader region that included northern New Mexico.)

The papers provided advice on rationing, county tire quotas, scrap drives, Red Cross work, and bond drives. Negative aspects naturally received attention, too. An "upsetting influence" of the war, the *Herald-Democrat* warned, was the "speeding up of the divorce rate." Marriage troubles "are likely to be one of the most impressive war problems."

The future, too, merited attention from the papers. When Durango earned a mention as a vital link in the plans of Western Airlines, the *Herald-Democrat* envisioned the community as a "prominent place in the global air network of the post war." Employment for returning veterans and war workers became a concern. Town leaders had watched Durango lose workers to higher paying defense jobs on the West Coast as early as 1940. New homes would soon become a priority, as



Doris Wilson

Walter and Doris Wilson, 1940s *Herald* owners

Durango faced "a critical housing shortage."

Harry McDevitt died in November, 1942. The *News* eulogized him as "one of [the] beloved and prominent citizens," who commanded the "respect of friend and foe alike." Doris and Walter Wilson assumed the paper's operations. Doris Wilson, who, along with her mother, worked on the paper, remembered, "Walter took over the management of the *Herald-Democrat*; he wrote the editorials." After running the paper for several years, the McDevitt/Wilson regime came to an end because of "ill-health, and a desire to enter another occupation." The family sold the paper in August, 1945, to two transplanted Texans, Harold "Prexy" Anderson and Alton Dorsett.

Dorsett recounted his memories of those days. He had gone to Gallup, New Mexico, to inquire about buying its newspaper, only to find that it had been taken off the market. The editor there informed Dorsett that Durango had a paper for sale. "I asked, 'Where's Durango?' He told me it was in the southern end of Colorado. I went back to the motel and talked to the owner, and he said since you're out here, you ought to go to Mesa Verde—that's how we found Durango, and I couldn't believe it."

Years later, Dorsett retained a vivid memory of the Durango he came to visit (and where he later lived for many years):

And when I came here in 1945, this was a really closed community. They didn't want any strangers, they didn't want anybody new coming in. The old timers, they didn't want any new blood. I'm still that damned 'furner' from Texas, but Prex and I had the advantage, though, we had the newspaper.

Many of the locals abhorred the fact that outsiders had purchased the *Herald-Democrat*. "They didn't appreciate it at all, but we were accepted."

We made a newspaper out of it; it was a 6-day a week, 6-column newspaper. We had listed 3,200 subscriptions and the press was



Susan Motz

Alton Dorsett and Harold "Prexy" Anderson, "outsiders" who purchased the *Herald* in 1945

actually 1,700 when we took it over, and when we sold it, it was running 4,200 on Sunday and 4,000 weekdays.

Before they sold the newspaper in 1948, Dorsett and Anderson reported on the rapid changes that were coming to Durango and southwestern Colorado. The oil/natural gas and uranium booms changed Durango immutably; for example, the population jumped from 5,887 in 1940 to 7,459 ten years later. Tourism picked up its pace also, as more visitors discovered the region's varied charms. The first vacation supplement to the newspaper, called "Westward Ho," was printed in May, 1948. "When You Come to Play, You'll Want to Stay," crowed the *Herald-Democrat* in May, 1952. The "Basin Vacation Wonderland" beckoned Americans to experience the truth of that slogan.

Working in the background, the co-publishers were also instrumental in bringing together the leaders of Animas City and Durango to discuss a possible merger. The *News* offered its enthusiastic support. The cooperative effort succeeded, when the vote in October, 1947, overwhelmingly favored unification. The *Herald-Democrat* (Oct. 29, 1947) reported the reactions of the two mayors. Animas City's Tom Price hoped any minor differences would now be forgotten "... in the new and larger task of making our greater community a better place in which to live, work and play." Tom Kimball, Durango's mayor, declared it to be the greatest day in the history of the two towns, concluding that it was his "untold pleasure to welcome into

our city residents of what was formerly Animas City."

The transitional forties and the early years of the fifties brought housing and school shortages, new leadership, and other side effects of rapid growth. These years—of potential and problems, of the passing of the old and the wary welcoming of the new—left their mark. The newspaper business reflected all of the uncertainty. The *Herald-Democrat* endured three ownership changes, being sold in 1945, 1948, and 1950. The *News* did better, changing hands only once, in 1946. Finally, in 1952, newspaper stability returned with the arrival of Arthur and Morley Ballantine.

"Monday is not a good news day" Ballantine Era, 1952-1992

The Ballantines came to Durango from Minneapolis. She was a member of the famous Cowles newspaper family, and he worked for the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*. They had decided that they wanted to buy a newspaper of their own and began looking for one in 1951. As for many midwesterners before them, and since, the West beckoned; that was where they wanted to put down roots. Durango had two newspapers up for sale at the time, the *Herald-Democrat* and the *News*.

The Ballantines decided to purchase both (June 1, 1952) and combine them into the daily *Herald-News*. That paper eventually evolved into the *Durango Herald* in July, 1960. Both name changes resulted simply from a need to shorten the paper's title. Arthur Ballantine remembered some of the problems of those days:

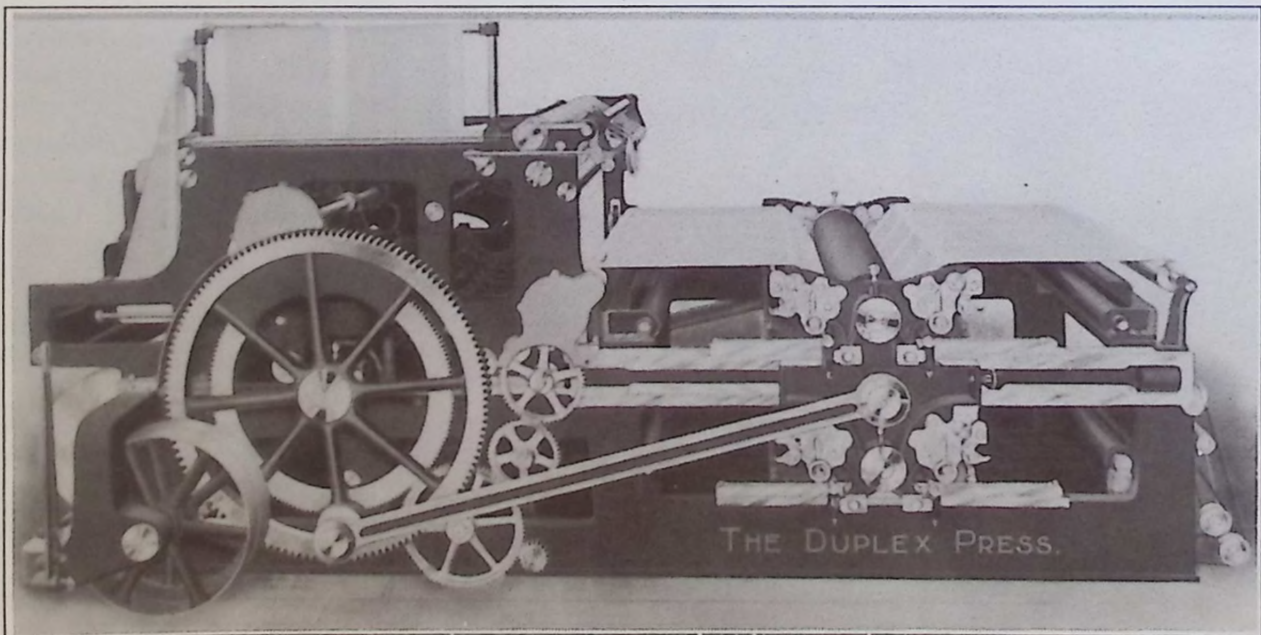
The *Herald-Democrat* had a circulation of around 3,000 or slightly over. It was terribly hard to work this out because they weren't au-

ditating circulation. It took us some time to find out who was really paying for the paper and who wasn't paying. The records were terrible. People whose subscriptions had expired for months would be kept on.

The new owners quickly found out what it meant to run a small-town newspaper.

They became immersed "up to their elbows" in a fight over safer drinking water for the community. The *Herald-News* campaigned for a new water system, a filtration plant, and a covered reservoir, and its publishers brought in state health officials and legislators to bolster their argument. Durangoans quickly took sides, and the Ballantines found themselves targeted for resentment as "outsiders." Before the brouhaha ended, the paper had lost \$10,000 in advertising revenue. But the paper survived the turmoil, and the campaign improved the water system.

Then Arthur fell into a dispute with a city council member, Harry Miller, who did not approve of the paper's coverage of council meetings. One evening, while conversing in front of his home with Judge James Noland, Arthur discovered that the Durango newspaper business could be dangerous to his health. Aggrieved councilman Miller suddenly



Duplex Perfecting Press used into the 1960s

The Durango Herald

"stepped out from behind one of these trees and popped Arthur in the eye and broke his glasses and that was all." Much speculation revolved around what might happen next. With a smile, Arthur told his friend Don Schlichting, "Oh, Don, I really think that since there is a seven-year statute of limitations on this, I'll let Harry Miller stew for a while." He never did prefer charges.

Improvements came to the paper gradually. A major step was taken in 1965, when the *Herald* converted to offset printing, and a new \$300,000 plant was built, "one of the best small daily plants for a city this size in the country." The new printing process allowed for better reproduction, particularly of photographs, and, as Arthur stated, proved to be "a great deal more flexible." Circulation now topped 5,000, and the "lean, difficult years of the early 1950s" had become a faded memory.

One element of the business, job printing, which had always been an important adjunct of the newspaper business in Durango, began to experience a downturn in profits. Arthur Ballantine explained, "Unless you have enormous volume of job printing—if you're going to run it with a manager and a staff — it carries quite a heavy expense load." In the early 1970s, the job shop did about \$60,000 worth of business. When it failed to improve upon that figure, the *Herald* phased out its job printing in 1981-82.

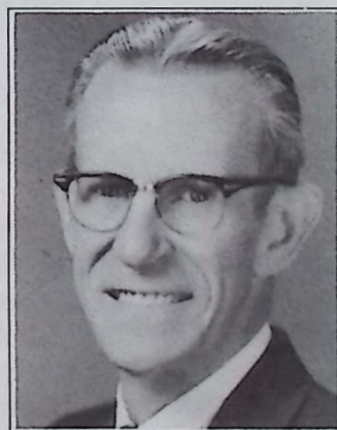


The Durango Herald

Arthur Ballantine, *Herald* publisher 1952-75

Just as was true for previous decades, the *Herald* would not have a monopoly on the newspaper business in Durango. By the 1970s, outside pressure was coming from Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Denver Post*, both of which arrived in the mornings, as opposed to the *Herald's* afternoon delivery. The Ballantines met the challenge head on and were convinced that the metropolitan newspapers posed no real threat, because the *Herald* was

the local newspaper and because we really concentrated on our staff. We have a bigger newsroom than most people would have. We have a number of things that some chain newspapers wouldn't. When they're [the city papers] economizing all that they can, we try to get as much in-depth coverage as we can, to cover some of the subjects more than just what you're given. That is partly due to Morley's and my belief that giving people information is the most important function of a newspaper, and if you can get correct information for them, they're going to begin making and rendering decisions.



Ann Malott

Paul Malott, publisher,
owner and managing
editor of the *Basin Star*

Competition came from at home, as well. The weekly *Basin Star* [Paul & Gerald Malott, and others - publishers] debuted on March

26, 1959, with an "open door policy" and no "axe to grind." The editors, sounding much like their nineteenth-century counterparts, pledged to present "fully, accurately and objectively" the news of interest to San Juan Basin residents. Furthermore, they promised to "keep our heads and sense of humor." They did it all, providing excellent coverage of local news and sharp photographic reproductions. In the end, however, the competition proved too stiff and the market too small. The *Basin Star* survived until June, 1962. An ill-advised revival in 1975 as a sports newspaper lasted less than four months.



Tom Stuber

Bill Wehrman and Tom Stuber in front of the *Today* office

Tom Stuber and Bill Wehrman launched the weekly *Today* in October, 1975. They had come west from St. Louis, liked the area, and stayed to investigate the idea of starting a newspaper. Stuber remembered, "Originally we were going to start a daily newspaper and talked to a lot of people. A lot of people really encouraged us to try to do something, and eventually we fell back to a weekly, thought that it was a better, more viable alternative. ..."

Their experiences revived memories of Caroline Romney's days. The paper came out on Wednesday, making Tuesday a day of

frantic activity. The typical week began on Friday, with the selling of advertisements, followed by more selling on Monday. Researching, news gathering, and writing were added on Tuesday. The men's wives, Susie Stuber and Eleanor Wehrman, did the typesetting, along with a couple of production people ("We were up all night Tuesday"). When the job was completed, about six in the morning, camera-ready layouts were delivered to the *Herald*. It printed the edition in time to be picked up about nine, when delivery began. "We would just kind of collapse Wednesday night and Thursday was just a day of recouping a little bit." Nevertheless, there always seemed to be work to do that day, too. Keeping the paper going allowed for no days off.

Susie Stuber told of following in the best newspaper tradition by going in to help with the typesetting and deliveries the morning she went into labor. She took along an emergency room doctor just in case! At its peak, *Today* had a run of 7,500, "We were a free delivery paper, we didn't charge." Generally, the two papers got along well, "a decent relationship; it was definitely a competitive relationship." An agreement had been reached, Stuber said, "that they couldn't take any of our stories, even though we were there on Wednesdays to be printed." He recalled, with a laugh, that an overly ambitious delivery boy had once caused trouble:

We had one kid, a very enterprising guy, who was supposed to deliver the papers at 3:30. Well, he would wait until 4:30 to deliver his papers. That was after the *Herald* delivered theirs, and he would throw the *Today* paper and pick up the *Herald* and go downtown, and he would sell the *Herald*.

Bill Wehrman remembered his first meeting with Arthur Ballantine. The *Herald* called and asked for the chance to bid on the *Today*'s printing contract; "I was a little shocked." It was a sound business decision, but "...it wasn't something I expected. I suppose there's always a little awe or fear on the part of a small businessman when he tries to compete with a

larger and firmly established business." Wehrman concluded, "There should have been no fear of Art Ballantine, though. He was a thoughtful and kind man..."

The *Today* publishers had anticipated only one rival, the *Herald*, but an eruption of enthusiasm in the mid-seventies far outraced good judgment. Durangoans at that time could read five weeklies, as well as a daily, at one time or another. *Today* lasted longer than its rivals, attaining the ten-year mark before it folded; by then, Wehrman and Stuber had sold out. Reviewing his newspaper career, Tom Stuber probably iterated what many others have felt over the years: "It was really fun; it's one of those things where you say, I'm really glad I did that, but I'm really glad I'm not doing it now."

The weekly *Mountain Eagle*, with energetic Kathleene Parker as editor, replaced several county papers and was published in Durango in the mid-seventies. It failed to survive for long, as did the *San Juan Journal*, despite having veteran newspaperman Louis Newell as its editor. Emily Goodyear brought yet another paper into the fray, the *Animas Journal*, but it too soon succumbed. The *Trading Post* contained more classified advertising than news. The papers came and went, all a part of Durango's newspaper heritage.

Those myriad challenges were something the Ballantines took in stride. In an interview on June 10, 1974, Arthur Ballantine propounded the *Herald's* philosophy and gave a fascinating insight into local publishing. To him, the secret was "keeping things in balance." Monday was "a very poor local news day traditionally. Nothing much happens over the weekend. Most of the news develops more during the course of the week."

We feel that we have to offer a balance of news in this paper, because we have a lot of people who only read the *Durango Herald*. We have to keep them informed about national, international, and state news. We feel that our life blood and the major reason for our existence is our local news coverage, but you can't do one and squeeze out the other.

Sports coverage contended with the eternal battle between local and national news:

We have a terrible problem covering local sports from all over this area, but we can't just cover local sports because most of our sports fans—whom I consider a minority of our readers, but a very vocal and important segment—are interested in some of these national sporting things.

Concluding his observations, Arthur Ballantine noted that "we do make a great effort about our local news, but we believe we have to have a mixture, and I try to allow our department heads a great deal of freedom in the way they organize their departments." A small newspaper, he believed, had to "take the talents you've got and develop them, and sometimes it means that the newspaper may be a little stronger in some fields than in others."

Ian (Sandy) Thompson, Associate Editor, 1970-73, remembered his days with the Ballantines:

What impresses me most about the Ballantines and the *Herald* is the willingness to allow the news/editorial staff a lot of autonomy in determining news/editorial content. I never had the feeling that any news story I was developing or any assignments I was making to reporters needed to be approved in advance by Arthur and Morley.

This policy could lead to trouble. A muck-raking, eager summer intern from Harvard once did a series of articles on the low wages paid by some of Durango's larger businesses. Thompson related the results:

After the first article of the series appeared, a number of prominent business leaders came to the *Herald* demanding that the series be stopped and that I be fired. They threatened to pull their advertising if their demands were not met . . . The businessmen were told

the series would continue and so would I. They pulled their advertising. That must have been difficult for the Ballantines, some of those advertisers were their close personal friends.

Even in the late twentieth century, small town newspaper owners still endured problems their ancestors a century before would have recognized.

The position of associate editor could also be a dangerous one. After Thompson wrote a favorable review of the movie "A Clockwork Orange," a good friend of his mother went to see the film. "When the movie was over, she marched out of the Kiva Theatre, up the street, into the newsroom, and stopped at my desk. Without saying a word, she hit me with her umbrella and left." It turned out that the woman opposed sex education!

On November 14, 1975, Arthur Ballantine, Jr. died of a heart attack, and Morley Ballantine became the editor and publisher. For years, she had participated in the newspaper's operation, sharing in the day-to-day decisions, and had been an award-winning editorial writer; she continued to write and involve herself in the daily operations. Their four children, all of whom had been involved since their childhood when they had newspaper routes, joined the board of directors.

Reflecting recently on the decision to carry on in 1975 rather than sell the paper, she observed: "It gave me a chance to continue with what had always interested Arthur and me—education, the rights of individuals to equality of opportunity and to justice, the importance of conscience and to see that the *Herald* reported fairly these concerns."

Summarizing the Ballantines' forty-year ownership of the *Herald*, Morley wrote:

For democracy to function successfully, its citizens need to have information about the wide variety of topics important to their government. They need complete information and they need accurate information. It's a newspaper's responsibility to provide this information.

There is the life of the marketplace and the life of the mind as well. Newspapers have an obligation to explain the former and encourage the latter.

As long-time editors of the *Herald*, we've thought of ourselves as socially liberal and fiscally conservative. We believe that there is an important role for government to play in our lives but, at the same time, the best government is that which governs least.

Sandy Thompson, now a weekly columnist for the *Herald*, outlined what he considered to be the strengths of the paper:

From my perspective, the Ballantines have always understood that it is not the editorial stance of the *Herald* that really influences the community. It is the editorial quality of the *Herald* that matters. They know that a newspaper is the most prominent indicator of the openness, tolerance, and diversity of the community.

Publisher Richard Ballantine commented that the Ballantines "believe that family owned, or independent newspapers, as opposed to chain or group ownership, are important to a community." They are carrying on a long tradition of family ownership and involvement that stretches from Caroline Romney, the Marshes, Raymonds, and Hartmans through the Days and McDevitts, to the Ballantines. Along with Morley and Richard, Elizabeth, Bill and Helen sit on the board of directors and "enthusiastically provide direction to the paper's management."

Thirty-six-year employee Don Schlichting, who filled several positions in the business, described the "big change" for him personally. From the mechanical point of view, it was "going from so-called hot type to photographic computer-generated type and going to off-set printing from letter press." Reflecting on the 1970s and 1980s, Don pointed to the changeover to the computer and the building of the addition, which added about 9,400

square feet, as two highlights. Several things stand out about those years in his mind: "As far as the *Herald* in the community was concerned, the ongoing impact of Animas/La Plata, the ongoing hassle. Election years were always big at the *Herald*, a lot of activity, a lot of work, a lot of fun."

Over the years, the *Herald* has won many awards, including the general excellence sweepstakes award (1981), and first place for general coverage of local government (1986). Reporters, including Amy Malick, Barry Smith, Dave Buchanan, Deborah Uroda, and Doug Storum, along with staff persons Don Steele and Sharon Hermes, have brought home individual awards.

Nineteen ninety-one proved to be a banner year, providing a fitting tribute for the paper's centennial-plus-a-decade history. It was named the winner of two best-daily-sweepstakes awards for general excellence and community service. For a newspaper with a daily circulation of about 8,500, that was an extraordinary achievement. The Colorado Press Association Daily Sweepstakes Award is judged on quality of reporting, headline writing, advertising, and page design. In total, the *Herald* won awards in nine of sixteen categories in the newspaper contest.

The newspaper life has its ups and downs, its good sides and its bad. The trials, the tribulations, and the joys of small-town journalism were succinctly stated by departing sports editor David Kirvin in his February 7, 1992, editorial. It provided an appropriate epigram for 112 years of Durango journalism since Mrs. Romney's first edition:

All of those [individuals he had mentioned], and many, many others, serve as a reminder that this business, despite all the hassles, is still good work if you can get it.

Some, however, don't see it like that. Criticizing the *Herald* is always in vogue. But putting out a daily newspaper is nothing short of a daily miracle. Believe me.

The staff at this paper works like hell everyday to give you your 25 cents worth.



The *Herald* as it appears today.



Mrs. Arthur (Morley) Ballantine

DURANGO HERALD

Epilogue

Within four months of Durango's birth, its first newspaper was being hawked on the streets. Now, 112 years later, these papers provide the historic record that Mrs. Romney envisioned in 1881. The dreams, the nightmares, the high points and the low ones that were a part of each successive generation of Durangoans are recorded in these pages. The many newspapers, their editors, and their reporters recorded the events of the world around them — their community and southwestern Colorado — giving us valuable insights and information about those years.

The *Herald* stands out as the most enduring. The name, under various owners, has emblazoned the front page since 1881, making it one of the longest lived of Durango's businesses. The Ballantines hold the record for ownership, forty years.

Yet, the *Herald* has always had plenty of competition. The exact number of all its competitors will probably never be known, because some of them published for such short periods; they left no known copies to mark their passing and so have been forgotten to history. At least twenty-three weeklies and sixteen dailies called Durango home at one time or another. They all began with great expectations, but with one exception, their dreams of grandeur died. Regardless of their short lives, they should not be labeled as failures.

In Durango, women have played a major role in the history of its newspapers, unlike many other Colorado and Rocky Mountain communities. Six have served as owners and/or editors; others have filled positions as reporters and worked in a variety of other capacities. What inspired the progressive trend here cannot be explained beyond the talent, motivation, and good fortune of those individuals involved. Durango did not provide an unusual haven for women in other professions.

Without question, the newspapers gave Durango an advantage in southwestern Colorado, and even in the entire four corners region. They promoted, defended, enlivened, and energized the community; no nearby town achieved the same advantage. Perhaps, as Sandy Thompson suggested, the *Herald's*

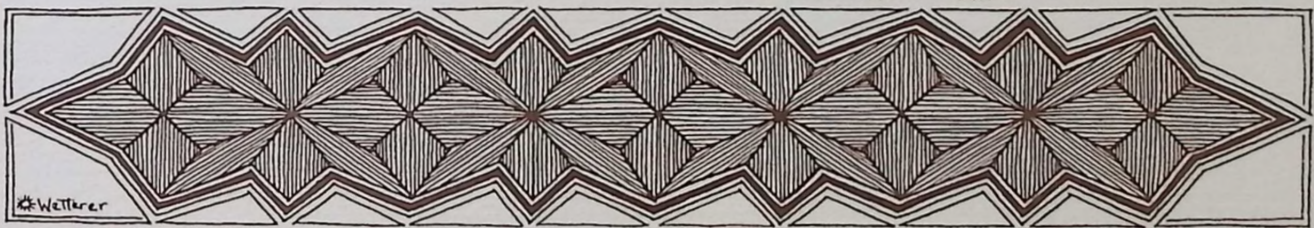
publishers should do more to diminish what he calls "regional provincialism" and "make a regional newspaper their goal." This is a need which the *Herald* board and staff recognize and it continues the subject of an ongoing debate as to how to achieve it.

The opportunity to succeed or fail is an inherent part of every aspect of the newspaper business. Both the successes and failures of Durango's newspapers made the town a richer place for their having published here. Writer, reporter, and news analyst Walter Lippmann wrote in 1920, "For the newspaper is in all literalness the bible of democracy, the book out of which a people determines its conduct. It is the only serious book most people read. It is the only book they read every day." Lippmann's observation remains as true today as it did then, and no doubt it will serve for the future, as well.

Famous newspaperman Joseph Pulitzer, on his retirement in 1907, spoke of what the newspaper should aspire to be:

... it will always fight for progress and reform, never tolerate injustice or corruption, always fight demagogues of all parties, never belong to any party, always oppose privileged classes and public plunderers, never lack sympathy with the poor, always remain devoted to the public welfare, never be satisfied with merely printing news, always be drastically independent, never be afraid to attack wrong, whether by predatory plutocracy or predatory poverty.

Dave Day would have approved these words wholeheartedly. The fact that Durango's newspapers sometimes failed to attain such lofty goals in every issue, or even in a season, does not negate their attempts to do so. Durangoans benefited in some way from every day of their existence. The papers and their publishers have earned the esteem of their beneficiaries.



K. Wetters



Durango Herald building, June, 1992

Jerry Hanes